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SUBJECT: DEMARCHE DELIVERED: EU MOVING AHEAD ON PLAN FOR

BLACK SEA MINISTERIAL

REF: SECSTATE 132171

¶1. (SBU) Per reftel instructions, USEU delivered the Black Sea Strategy demarche to Janos Herman, Principal Advisor for Regional Cooperation, DG RELEX on September 27. Herman agreed that the U.S. regional strategy complemented the EU's new "Black Sea Synergy" initiative approved by EU Foreign Ministers in May 2007. As evidence of the EU's burgeoning interest in the region, Herman noted that the European Commission attained observer status at the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Coordination (BSEC) in June 2007. The Commission has also signaled to BSEC its support for the candidacies of four more EU member states -- the UK, Lithuania, Hungary, and Cyprus. (Note: There are currently seven EU member states BSEC: the Czech Republic, Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Poland and Slovakia.)

¶2. (SBU) Moreover, Herman confirmed that the Commission is preparing for a high-level political event in the region in early 2008 as a platform to "provide "political orientation and visibility to" the Black Sea Synergy. Ukraine, as the incoming Chair of BSEC, has agreed to host an EU-BSEC ministerial meeting as a side event of a BSEC conference in January. The Commission hopes that the participants will issue a joint ministerial statement at the conclusion of the event. With this in mind, DG RELEX is now preparing a draft text that "balances" competing EU institutional and member states' interests in various aspects of the Synergy. Herman acknowledged that it may prove even more difficult to reach agreement with Turkey and Russia on such any such joint statement. Although the EU intends the ministerial to be a bilateral event, the Ukrainian Ambassador to the EU told Poloff that the United States should consider participation as well.

¶3. (SBU) Senior Commission officials have also signaled interest in accelerating regional cooperation in the environmental and energy areas. During a conference of ministers from all the countries covered by the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) that took place in Brussels on September 3, Commissioner for External Relations Benita Ferrero-Waldner announced that the Commission would launch a feasibility study to examine where the existing legal arrangements in the EU and its neighbors' energy sectors fall short, and how to strengthen them. The study would look into whether a new "neighborhood energy agreement" or legal

framework would be the best solution for making energy markets work more efficiently for consumers, producers, and transit countries. Commission President Barroso similarly noted the need to protect the environment, tackle climate change, and reinforce energy security in the EU-ENP area.

¶4. (SBU) Other Commission contacts were less enthusiastic about the EU's own Black Sea Synergy initiative. They noted that the initiative has the potential to constrain EU policy rather than expand it, by keeping the EU bound by the document. They also questioned whether the Synergy's placement of Russia on equal political footing in discussions of the region is actually in the EU's interest.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: We would expect the European Commission to look askance at a proposal to transform their planned bilateral ministerial event with BSEC member states into a trilateral meeting with the United States. At the same time, USEU would be interested in the view from Embassies Kyiv, Bucharest, and Sofia on such an idea.

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